

## APPENDIX 1 PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
<b>Review:</b>	<b>Tree Asset Management</b>
<b>Link Officer/s:</b>	<b>Dale Rowbotham / Mark Nozedar</b>
<b>Action Plan Agreed:</b>	<b>March 2023</b>

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation). Any evidence on the impact of the actions undertaken should also be recorded for each recommendation.

<b>Recommendation 1:</b>	<b>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) refreshes its tree and woodland management policy and procedures, and as part of this:</b>
	<b>a) Reaffirms its mandatory (minimum) service requirements and where work is prioritised (e.g. high-use public areas).</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>
Date:	October 2023
Agreed Action:	Publication of the key message that essential maintenance works to maintain public safety of trees and woodland is our high priority, with other service requests itemised with an appropriate priority rating and timescale.
Agreed Success Measure:	Communications plan to disseminate information from revised policy.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	Once introduced as policy residents will have a detailed understanding of service requirements of the authority and how work is prioritised.
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Draft policy now produced and shared with committee for feedback (see attached <b>Appendix 1a</b> ).

## APPENDIX 1

### PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management

Assessment of Progress (June 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	Prior to going through the formal process of making the draft policy approved policy, and due to the work and input from the committee, it was felt that comments should be sourced from the committee before progressing further.
	<b>b) Reflects within it the realistic cycle of essential maintenance of the Borough's tree stock (and that this be updated as and when required).</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>
Date:	October 2023
Agreed Action:	Maintenance timescales reflective of the current service availability will be delivered within the policy
Agreed Success Measure:	Realistic timescales regarding SBC tree stock maintenance are clearly visible within the revised policy.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	Once introduced as policy residents will have a detailed understanding of maintenance timescales of the authority.
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Draft policy now produced and shared with committee for feedback (see attached <b>Appendix 1a</b> ).
Assessment of Progress (June 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	Prior to going through the formal process of making the draft policy approved policy, and due to the work and input from the committee, it was felt that comments should be sourced from the committee before progressing further.
	<b>c) Emphasises a key message throughout this review regarding the planting of the correct species of tree in the right places (helping to minimise future maintenance requirements and revenue costs).</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>
Date:	October 2023

## APPENDIX 1

### PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management

Agreed Action:	The revised policy will highlight that the planting of the correct species of tree relevant to the appropriate area is vital in ensuring future maintenance requirements are aligned with resource.
Agreed Success Measure:	Key links to the Environmental Sustainability and Carbon Reduction Strategy 2022-2032 and detail on how we will identify the right tree based on area.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	This is currently happening and positive links between a number of departments and the arboriculture team continue to grow. This approached, highlighted in the policy, will ensure residents are aware that future tree planting will not impact the ongoing maintenance of the rest of the tree stock.
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Draft policy now produced and shared with committee for feedback (see attached <b>Appendix 1a</b> ).
Assessment of Progress (June 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	Prior to going through the formal process of making the draft policy approved policy, and due to the work and input from the committee, it was felt that comments should be sourced from the committee before progressing further.
	<b>d) Ensures the updated policy and procedures are published on relevant Council platforms, with an appropriate communications plan to ensure the local population can read its content and understand what future service it can expect.</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>
Date:	October 2023
Agreed Action:	Revision to ensure a 'readable' policy and work with the corporate communication team to ensure publication of key messages along with links to the policy within relevant areas of the corporate website.
Agreed Success Measure:	Communications plan to disseminate information from revised policy.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	The team have produced a draft of the refreshed policy with changes being made prior to completion of final draft. At that stage the relevant governance process will begin to make the draft current policy. This element of the action

## APPENDIX 1

### PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management

	plan had slipped due to delays in the service review of 2023, which also delayed the recruitment of the business support officer. The business support officer was a key element to free up time of the principal tree and woodlands officer. Communications are aware of the requirement to disseminate the information, and this will be dealt with in line with the council's communications plan and platforms.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	Communications contacted to plan dissemination. Communications plan to follow upon completion of final draft to policy.
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Draft policy now produced and shared with committee for feedback (see attached <b>Appendix 1a</b> ).
Assessment of Progress (June 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	Prior to going through the formal process of making the draft policy approved policy, and due to the work and input from the committee, it was felt that comments should be sourced from the committee before progressing further.
	<b>e) Utilises both print (e.g. Stockton News) and electronic mediums to raise awareness of the current issues around tree management within the Borough, including responsibilities in relation to trees on private land.</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Communications</li> </ul>
Date:	October 2023
Agreed Action:	Ensure a full communications plan is in place to start once formal approval of the revised policy has been achieved.
Agreed Success Measure:	Communications plan to disseminate information from revised policy.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	As above, communications plan will be drafted upon final draft of policy being approved.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	Effective communications of policy and key information.
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Draft policy now produced and shared with committee for feedback (see attached <b>Appendix 1a</b> ).

## APPENDIX 1

### PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management

Assessment of Progress (June 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	Prior to going through the formal process of making the draft policy approved policy, and due to the work and input from the committee, it was felt that comments should be sourced from the committee before progressing further.

<b>Recommendation 2:</b>	<b>Tree Preservation Order (TPO) planning procedures be reiterated to all SBC Ward Councillors and relayed to residents periodically via the Council’s multiple communication mechanisms (emphasising the enforcement action that can be taken if processes are not followed).</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> <li>• Planning</li> </ul>
Date:	August 2023
Agreed Action:	Development of an easy read document, incorporating some key Q&As, relating to Tree Preservation Orders and potential enforcement action which can be shared through members bulletins. A more detailed webpage to supplement the easy read document to be proposed alongside.
Agreed Success Measure:	Easy read document specific to TPOs and updated information on corporate website to provide more detailed information.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	Due to the delays in the service review being complete and the knock-on delay with recruitment this was not complete until early 2024. An easy read document has been drafted and agreed with the arboriculture team and planning (see Appendix 2) and is ready to be made available to all SBC ward Councillors. A revised process in works approvals has also been approved and has been introduced in order to speed up decisions relating to residents work requests to TPOs.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	The easy read will ensure residents will have access to some of the most regular questions received by the authority on TPOs and the introduction of the new authorisation process will help speed up resident requests.
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Changes made to easy read guide following feedback from committee (see attached <b>Appendix 1b</b> ).
Assessment of Progress (June 2024): (include explanation if required)	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	Revised draft provided before sharing with members and arranging for this to be displayed on the council's website.

**APPENDIX 1**  
**PROGRESS UPDATE: Review of Tree Asset Management**

<b>Recommendation 4:</b>	<b>A detailed business case be produced for consideration by SBC management regarding a potential reinforcement team within Grounds Maintenance to undertake smaller scale routine maintenance, thereby allowing the existing Tree and Woodland Management Service specialist staff to focus on more technical operations.</b>
Responsibility:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Manager – Community Services &amp; Transport</li> </ul>
Date:	May 2023
Agreed Action:	A detailed business case paper to be prepared for discussion at CMT.
Agreed Success Measure:	Report to CMT.
Evidence of Progress (March 2024):	Due to the team not being fully staffed and the service review was still ongoing this report has yet to go to CMT. However, due to the heavy rain seen last year staff were deployed onto this work as they were unable to undertake grass cutting works. It is now anticipated that the report will be prepared for CMT in April/May 2024.
Assessment of Progress (March 2024): <small>(include explanation if required)</small>	<b>3 (Slipped)</b>
Evidence of Impact (March 2024):	
Evidence of Progress (June 2024):	Due to small changes within the ground’s maintenance and arboriculture service, as a result of staff retirements, additional resource has been allocated from within grounds to undertake smaller scale routine maintenance.
Assessment of Progress (June 2024): <small>(include explanation if required)</small>	<b>1 (Fully Achieved)</b>
Evidence of Impact (June 2024):	No requirement to further request additional resource with additional resource allocated from within the wider ground’s maintenance team.

<b>Assessment of Progress Gradings:</b>	<b>1</b> Fully Achieved	<b>2</b> On-Track	<b>3</b> Slipped	<b>4</b> Not Achieved
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